THE IDENTITY CRISES OF WOMEN IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF ANITA NAIR AND CHETAN BHAGAT: A STUDY

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1. Introduction:

The proposed research entitled “The Identity Crises of Women in the Select Novels of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat: A Study” is an attempt to make an investigatory analysis of ‘The Identity Crises of Women’ as depicted in the select novels by Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat from a feminist perspective.

Women often face difficulties in understanding their own identity. As a result, supporters of women's rights in India are challenging the traditional dominance of men. Our identity encompasses our thoughts, ideas, and actions. Some parts, such as our appearance and job, can change, but our beliefs and behavior tend to remain consistent. When someone dislikes their own identity and feels unhappy with who they are, it is known as an "identity crisis." This can lead to dissatisfaction with their actions and a belief that their thoughts and ideas are unimportant. If left unresolved, this issue can worsen and might require medical assistance. An identity crisis can lead to a loss of self-confidence, self-perception, self-belief, and hope for improvement. This challenge is prevalent in Indian society, particularly affecting women who often bear the brunt of this problem.

Nair’s and Bhagat's novels present various viewpoints and situations where women need to reflect on their identities. These stories highlight the challenges women confront in society and their own emotions. The study closely examines the characters, the progression of the story, and the author's storytelling techniques. Its goal is to demonstrate how these books help us grasp the links between gender, identity, and self-discovery.

In the present rapidly changing world, where old beliefs about gender and identity do not always fit, it is crucial to understand how women view themselves. This study examines the books of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat to uncover women's complex experiences. It discusses their struggles, accomplishments, and transformations. Through this research, we explore literature to gain insight into women's lives, connecting their stories to today's reality. In the present research, a comparative analysis of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat's novels from a feminist perspective aims to unravel the themes of women's identity crises, revealing the pathways they explore, challenge, and redefine in contemporary Indian society.

2. Literature Review:

There are several studies on Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat's works. The depiction of women's identity crises in literature has been a subject of extensive research, and the works of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat have sparked discussions about the depiction of women characters in their novels. Here are some related studies that provide insights into this topic:

a) **Evolution of the Female Self A Study of the Women Protagonists in the Select Novels of Anita Desai Shashi Deshpande and Anita Nair** (**2020**) **by Aparna Sundaram**: This thesis aimed at studying the evolution of the woman's self as reflected in literature, particularly in Indian Writing in English. The purpose of this thesis was to study the image of women in Indian English literature and to ascertain the growth of the protagonists through the decades in post-independent India. The thesis chose women writers like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Anita Nair deliberately because they, as sensitive women would be in a better position to define women characters and bring out their real stories to the fore.

b) **"Female Protagonists in the Novels of Anita Nair: A Feminist Perspective" (2017) by Patil Poonam:** The researcher focuses on the present research The fiction of Anita Nair, by and large, deals with the life of the female protagonists from the feminist point of view. The female protagonists in her fiction try to assert their individuality and try to fulfill their ambition not ignoring their responsibility. The researcher explores that Anita Nair has been very bold and frank in her depiction of the family life of middle-class women, and their struggle to define their life in the by and large patriarchal set-up of Indian society

c) **Women in the select novels of Anita Nair and Rupa Bajwa a study (2019) by Pavani, G**: This research explores that Anita Nair and Rupa Bajwa's novels have dealt with the lives and experiences of women, who face discrimination and traumatic experiences in their family life. They have discussed issues such as subjugation of women, domestic violence, gender discrimination, identity crisis and rape. Their fiction mainly presents the ethos of middle-class women in Indian urban life.

d) **Towards Self-discovery A Study of Women Characters in the Select Novels of Shashi Deshpande Anita Nair and Manju Kapur (2018) by Rajalakshmi S.:** This research reveals that Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, and Manju Kapur, as novelists bring forward

the fact that the disappointments, frustrations, and anger experienced by women enable them to assert their individuality and transform them into emancipated beings.

e) **Problem of Identity and Human Relationship in Anita Nair's Select Novels (2019) by Latha, S.:** This research focuses on how Anita Nair's radical female characters uncover the masks of some conventions in which they are trapped by society. Women are naturally endowed with power and that is not directly accessible to anyone. Women are the amalgamation of both strengths and weaknesses. Anita Nair's characters represent the wounded female psyche too. Even the feminine consciousness awakens the traditional norms of society; the active female does not stop her interrogative attitude from playing the traditional role of a woman and becomes a rebel against society.

f) **"Culture and Gender Identity A Study of Chetan Bhagat's Select Novels" (2019) by Aparna Tiwari**: This study could offer insights into how Chetan Bhagat is involved with themes of culture, and gender identity and discusses the issues of modern society-related to the women.

g) **Theme of Alienation and Identity Crisis in The Select Novels of Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee (2020) by Nanda A.**: This study might provide insights into the quest for identity is an often-recurring theme in the fiction of Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. This quest for identity is manifested in the different women characters in their rebellion against Indian tradition and conventions, their attempts to assert their individualities, and their efforts to develop a whole and harmonious self, at both emotional and intellectual levels and thus experience real peace and happiness in their lives.

h) **"Analysing the feminine self A postfeminist study of women's quest for identity in the select novels of Jasihree Misra and Anita Nair" (2022) by Hima S.:** This study explores themes like feminine sensuality, extra-marital affairs, and homosexual relations in their works. The writers are critical of marriage and the patriarchal social setting prevalent in Indian society.

i) **Cultural Hybridity and Ambivalence of Identity in the Select Novels of Kiran Desai and Chetan Bhagat a Critical Study (2023) by Gaikwad N. S.:** This research explores that Desai and Bhagat's work, most of the characters seem to be in search of their own identities. They try to blend in with the society they inhabit**.**

j) **Feminism Communalism and Careerism in the Select Novels of Chetan Bhagat (2019) by Anuradha V.:** This research explores that a proper focus would make people understand that feminism is a problematic issue even today in the subcontinent as there is a tug-of-war between liberal feminism on one side and orthodoxy on the other. A part of India allows women to enjoy unrestricted freedom, while the other half kills them for love and rapes them for lust. In such a scenario literary writers pitch in to make people understand the importance of liberty through their stories. They make them visualize the unreality in such a manner that it becomes a possibility sometime in the future.

3. Statements of Problem:

The following statements of problems are observed by the researcher to be resolved in the proposed research study:

a) Characters in Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat's novels often grapple with societal expectations versus personal desires, leading to identity conflicts mirroring the real-life challenges of Indian women.
b) The clash between traditional values and progressive goals forms the core of women's identity crises, evident in the works of both authors.
c) The study focuses on narrative voices in the novels to understand how they contribute to portraying women's identity crises, analyzing conflicts like tradition vs. modernity and individual freedom vs. societal constraints.
d) How the selected literary texts reflect and question women's identity in contemporary Indian society.
e) The study aims to critically assess the portrayal of Indian women in these novels, examining alignment with reality, authors' narrative choices, and contributions to shaping literary and societal views on women's roles, aspirations, and challenges.

4. Significance of the Study:

After entering in 21st century many scholars of humanities including literary ones have been trying to explore and describe various significant perspectives of contemporary Indian writing in English. However, the present study deals with a distinct avenue to contemporary Indian writing in English**.**

The study is significant in understanding how three waves of feminism have brought rapid changes in the rights of women in India that have also impacted reshaping Indian feminist literature. The present study explores women's identity crises in the selected novels of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat which is a significant aspect of contemporary Indian writing in English.

The present research is significant as Anita Nair is one of a feminist novelist and humanist, throws light on the unknown and unique facets of women's lives and the world and thereby offers a new perspective through her works. Selected novels of Anita Nair explore the themes of family, relationships, women's identity crises, social position, and gender inequality.

The present study is significant as Chetan Bhagat is considered a youth icon rather than just an author in modern Indian literature. He is also a good columnist and YouTuber. Selected novels of Chetan Bhagat explore freedom and liberty, gender differences, individualism, the emancipation of women, women's identity crises, women's education, and liberation.

5. Objectives of the Study:

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a critical analysis of the women's identity crisis in the select novels of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat. By delving into their respective histories, this study aims to:

a) To examine the impact of three waves of feminism in Indian English Literature.

b) To examine the Indian feminist writer and novelist who paved the way for Indian women's identity in contemporary Indian society.

c) To focus on various problems of the Indian society faced by women to prove their identity.

d) To examine how the novels of Anita Nair, *The Better Man, Ladies Coupe, Mistress, Lessons in Forgetting, and Eating Wasps* explore the theme of identity crises, including empowerment, self-discovery, and resilience.

e) To investigate and analyze how the novels of Chetan Bhagat's *2 States: The Story of My Marriage, Half Girlfriend, One Indian Girl, The Girl in Room 105, and Five-Point Someone* intermingle the themes of freedom and liberty, gender differences, individualism, the emancipation of women, women identity crises, women education, and liberation in his novels.

f) To conduct a comparative analysis of the novels of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat both authors explore the identity crises of women with their different perspectives on relationships, family dynamics, and societal expectations.

6. Hypothesis:

Based on the above objectives the following hypotheses are formed to be investigated:

a) There is an impact of three waves of feminism on Indian feminist literature in English only.

b) Anita Nair has explored the notions of women's identity crises, including empowerment, self-discovery, and resilience in his novels.

c) Chetan Bhagat has explored the notions of freedom and liberty, gender differences, individualism, the emancipation of women, women's identity crises, women's education, and liberation in his novels.

d) Anita Nair's and Chetan Bhagat's novels reflect various problems and situations of women in contemporary Indian society.

e) The Indian feminist writer enriched English literature and paved the way for the liberation of women, empowerment, and rights of women in contemporary Indian society

7. Data Collection:

The data for the present research will be collected in the following two stages:

a) Primary Data Collection:

The primary data of the proposed study is the selected novels of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat.

b) Secondary Data Collection:

1) **Books**: Books on Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat, the theoretical works on feminism will be used to collect data for the secondary sources.
2) **Research journals**: Articles, papers, and relevant material will be Compiled.
3) **Reference Works:** Encyclopedia, Dictionaries, Thesaurus, Yearbooks, Handbooks, Primary reports, Proceedings of the Conferences, Seminars, and other material will be used to collect secondary data.

8. Research Methodology:

The foundation of the proposed study rests upon the qualitative analysis method. This approach enables a deep and nuanced exploration of the subject matter by delving into the intricate layers of meaning, context, and interpretation present in the selected literary texts. Through qualitative analysis, the study aims to uncover the subtleties of women's identity crises as portrayed in the novels of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat.

a) Integration of Critical Method:

The critical method forms an integral component of the study's research framework. This method involves a rigorous examination of the text's themes, symbols, character motivations, and underlying ideologies. By employing a critical lens, the research endeavors to dissect the novels' narrative strategies and unearth the implications of societal norms and gender dynamics on the characters' identity crises.

b) Incorporation of Evaluative Method:

The evaluative method plays a pivotal role in assessing the quality, significance, and impact of the selected literary works. Through this method, the study aims to assess how effectively Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat address women's identity crises within their novels. This evaluation involves appraising the authors' choices, narrative techniques, and the resonance of their portrayals with the overarching themes of feminism and identity.

c) Application of Analytical Method:

The analytical method serves as a guiding tool to dissect the multifaceted layers of the novels. This method involves breaking down the texts into distinct elements—such as plot, character development, dialogues, and symbolism—to comprehend their role in portraying women's identity crises. By employing analytical techniques, the research seeks to discern patterns, motifs, and connections that contribute to the overarching thematic exploration.

d) Emphasis on Descriptive Method:

The descriptive method is crucial for providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. It involves meticulous detailing of the characters' dilemmas, their interactions, and the broader societal contexts that influence their identity struggles. Through vivid descriptions, the study aims to offer readers a clear and immersive depiction of the protagonists' experiences within the novels.

e) Utilization of Library Method:

The library method, an essential component of the research, involves an extensive review of existing literature, scholarly articles, and critical analyses relevant to the study's subject. This method enables the study to build upon prior research, engage with academic discussions, and establish a strong theoretical foundation for its exploration of women's identity crises within Indian contemporary literature.

f) Integration of Comparative Method:

The comparative method brings a comparative dimension to the research, facilitating a juxtaposition of the novels by Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat. By examining both authors' works, the study can identify similarities, differences, and unique approaches to portraying women's identity crises. This method enriches the analysis by offering insights into distinct narrative styles, thematic emphases, and the authors' contributions to the discourse.

9. Scope of the Research:

This research explores Indian feminist literary history by studying the impact of different waves of feminism on Indian women writers. The study aims to understand how evolving feminist ideas influence the works of authors in India. It goes beyond analyzing characters and connects their identity struggles to the progression of feminism in the country.

The research looks at Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat's novels, which provide unique perspectives on women's experiences and modern urban life. By studying their writings, the research seeks to reveal how these authors address societal norms, personal goals, and challenges related to women's identity in today's India.

This study not only examines identity crises in the novels of Nair and Bhagat but also explores how their narratives align with the broader history of Indian feminist literature. By exploring feminism's different waves and analyzing these authors' works, this research deepens our understanding of how literature reflects and shapes discussions about women's identity in contemporary Indian society.

10. Limitations of the Research:

It is important to acknowledge its limitations. The following will be the limitations of the proposed research:

a) Scope within Indian English Literature:

The scope of this present research is distinctly confined to the realm of Indian English literature. The analysis and exploration primarily revolve around literary works penned in English, thereby focusing on a specific subset of Indian literature.

b) Feminist Perspective on Identity Crisis:

The research is specifically grounded in a feminist perspective, honing in on the intricate relationship between gender dynamics, societal norms, and personal identity. This emphasis on feminist analysis provides a unique framework for understanding how women's identity crises are portrayed and examined within the selected literary texts.

c) Focus on Novels by Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat:

The present study hones in on the novels authored by Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat. While this might seem limited in terms of the authors under examination, it offers a concentrated exploration of these distinct voices within contemporary Indian literature.

d) Examination of Women Identity Crises from Feminist Theory:

The research undertakes a focused investigation into the portrayal of women's identity crises within the context of feminist theory. More specifically, it seeks to analyze how the three waves of feminism—each with its unique perspective and emphasis—manifest in the selected novels of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat.

11.The Scheme of Chapter:

The present research is divided into the following 6 chapters:

a) **Chapter 1: Introduction**
a) **Chapter 2: Projection of Women and Their Identity Crisis in Indian English Novels**
b) **Chapter 3: Women's Identity Crises in Anita Nair's Novel**
c) **Chapter 4: Women's Identity Crises in Chetan Bhagat's Novel**
d) **Chapter 5: Comparative Analysis of Anita Nair and Chetan Bhagat's Novels**
e) **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The chapter scheme of the present research study is explored as follows:

The **First Chapter** will offer an introduction to the origin of the term *Identity and Identity Crises* in English literature concerning Indian literature and feminist waves. The chapter also

explores *Erik Erikson's theory of Identity Crises* and its development. The chapter also explores a detailed discussion and the impact of three feminist waves on women's condition in India. The chapter ends with different identity crises faced by women in ancient India and the contribution of Indian feminist authors to the women's identity crises in the novels. It is followed by a methodological introduction to the significance, aims, objectives, hypothesis, research methodology, scope, and limitations of the research and chapter scheme of the present study. Then it explores the history of Indian literature concerning feminist writers and novelists in India.

The **Second Chapter** will begin with a review of literature that explores the theme of the *Projection of women and identity crises* in contemporary Indian society. It is followed by the aims and objectives of the literature review with related articles, books, and journal studies. It is followed by the summary and findings of the chapter.

The **Third Chapter** will open with a biography and introduction of Anita Nair and her contribution to Indian feminism and feminist writings. Then it presents an investigatory analysis of her selected novels that explore the theme of women's identity crises as a primary source. It is followed by how Anita Nair's novel's female character explores the theme of *identity and identity crises* in Indian society. Her novels *The Better Man, Ladies Coupe, Mistress, Lessons in Forgetting, and Eating Wasps* reflect the identity crises of female characters. The chapter ends with a summary and findings.

The **Fourth Chapter** will begin with an introduction and biography of Chetan Bhagat with his contribution to modern *Indian literature and youth culture.* Then it is followed by a critical analysis of the selected novels *2 States: The Story of My Marriage, Half Girlfriend, One Indian Girl, The Girl in Room 105, and Five-Point Someone* by Chetan Bhagat that reflect female character identity in social and cultural context with the notion of freedom and liberty, gender differences, individualism, the emancipation of women, women identity crises, women education, and liberation in his novels. It is followed by a summary of the chapter.

The **Fifth Chapter** will start with a comparative analysis of chapter Three and Chapter Four and its findings with a summary. Then it will present Anita Nair's and Chetan Bhagat's perspectives on women's struggle for identity and identity crises comparison and critical analysis.

The **Sixth Chapter** presents the attachments of objectives and the validation of the hypothesis. Further, it explores the major findings and the conclusion of the present study. Then the scope for further research will be presented.

12. Probable Date of Research Completion:

The present research is proposed to be completed within the time limit as per the university's predetermined guidelines for the Ph.D. degree.

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